

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE
TOWN OF EKALAKA, MONTANA
WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS**

TO: ALL INTERESTED PERSONS

Date: March 21, 2008
Action: Funding Water and Sewer System Improvements
Location of Project: Town of Ekalaka, Montana
DEQ Funding: \$306,000.
Total Project Cost: \$1,566,000.

An environmental review has been conducted by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for proposed funding for improvements to the Town of Ekalaka's water and sewer systems. The proposed project is to replace a substandard wastewater lift station, replace water and sewer mains along Main Street from the intersection of Main Street and Park Street to the intersection of Main Street and Mormon Avenue, and replace the water line from the intersection of Main Street and Mormon Avenue to the two existing water storage reservoirs. The town is experiencing major problems with its main lift station. Electrical and float system failures have caused wastewater at the single pump station to back up into homes and overflow into Russell Creek. The water mains were installed in the mid 1930's and are in very poor condition and have had recent breaks in the mains. The sewer pipe is old and it needs to be upgraded to the minimum design standard grade and additional manholes are needed to allow for cleaning and maintenance.

The affected environment will be within the Town of Ekalaka and within previously disturbed areas and the immediate vicinity. The human environment affected will include residents and visitors of the aforementioned areas. Based on the environmental assessment (EA), the project is not expected to have any significant adverse impacts upon terrestrial and aquatic life or habitat, including endangered species, water quality or quantity, air quality, geological features, cultural or historical features, or social quality.

This project will be funded with a low interest loan through the Montana Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Program, administered by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

The DEQ utilized the following references in completing its environmental review of this project: a Preliminary Engineering Report, a Uniform Environmental Checklist for Montana Public Facility Projects and a Uniform Application for Montana Public Facility Projects all prepared by Kadrmas, Lee and Jackson, the community's consulting engineer. In addition to these references, letters were sent to; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Montana Historical Society (SHPO), National Park Service, Bureau of Land management (BLM), Montana Department of Environmental

Quality (MDEQ), Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). A response has been received from most of the agencies. All additional agency responses received during the 30-day FONSI comment period will be addressed prior to finalizing the environmental review process. These references are available for review upon request by contacting:

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Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901
Phone (406) 444-5324
Email: tteegarden@mt.gov

or Joe Carey
Town of Ekalaka
P.O. Box 338
Ekalaka, MT 59324
Phone (406) 775-8731

Comments on this finding or on the EA may be submitted to DEQ at the above address. After evaluating substantive comments, DEQ may revise the EA or determine if an EIS is necessary. This finding will stand if no substantive comments are received during the 30-day comment period or if substantive comments are received and evaluated and the environmental impacts are still determined to be non-significant.

Signed,

Todd Teegarden, Chief
Technical & Financial Assistance Bureau

TOWN OF EKALAKA
WATER, SEWER AND STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

I. COVER SHEET

A. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Applicant: Town of Ekalaka
Address: P.O. Box 338
Ekalaka, MT 59324
Project Number: Not yet assigned

B. CONTACT PERSON

Name: Joe Carey, Mayor
Town of Ekalaka
Address: P.O. Box 338
Ekalaka, MT 59324
Telephone: (406) 775-8731

C. ABSTRACT

The Town of Ekalaka provides water and wastewater service to a population of approximately 410 people. The proposed project is to replace a substandard wastewater lift station and control panel, replace water and sewer along Main Street from the intersection of Main Street and Park Street to the intersection of Main Street and Mormon Avenue, and replace the water line from the intersection of Main Street and Mormon Avenue to the two existing water storage reservoirs. The town is experiencing major problems with its main lift station. Electrical and float system failures have caused wastewater at the single pump station to back up into homes and overflow into Russell Creek. The water mains were installed in the mid 1930's and are in very poor condition and have had recent breaks in the mains. The sewer pipe is old and needs to be upgraded to the minimum design standard grade and additional manholes are needed to allow for cleaning and maintenance.

The proposed wastewater lift station and water and sewer system project improvements will enable the town to maintain compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and will ensure that drinking water meeting state and federal regulations will continue to be safely and reliably provided to all consumers. It will also ensure that sewer backups into homes and lift station overflows are eliminated.

The project will be funded in part by a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan. Environmentally sensitive characteristics such as wetlands, floodplains and threatened or endangered species are not expected to be adversely impacted as a consequence of the proposed project. No significant long-term environmental impacts were identified during the preparation of this document.

D. COMMENT PERIOD

Thirty calendar days.

II. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

A. EXISTING LIFT STATION REPLACEMENT AND PIPE REPLACEMENT.

The Ekalaka water and wastewater systems provide service to a population of approximately 410. The proposed project is to replace and update a wastewater lift station and control panel, replace the water and sewer along Main Street from the intersection of Main Street and Park Street to the intersection of Main Street and Mormon Avenue, and the water line from the intersection of Main Street and Mormon Avenue to the water storage reservoirs. The town is experiencing major problems with its main lift station. Electrical and float system failures have caused wastewater at the single pump lift station to back up into homes and overflow into Russell Creek. The water mains were installed in the mid 1930's and are in very poor condition. The sewer pipe is under the minimum grade standard and an additional manhole is needed.

A. PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project includes the following improvements:

1. Replace the single pump wastewater lift station and control panel with a duplex (double) pump lift station.
2. Replace approximately 1000 feet of wastewater collection line due to inadequate slope and manhole spacing.
3. Replacement approximately 3,200 feet of water main up to the existing water storage tank.

By replacing the failing lift station and water and wastewater mains the town will ensure that an adequate supply of safe water will continue to be delivered to the users of the system and public health and safety with respect to the water supply will be ensured.

III. ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

A. ALTERNATIVES

Four alternatives, and combinations of those options were considered for

addressing the Town's wastewater lift station, water distribution, and sewer collection needs:

1. **DO NOTHING** – This would mean that the Town's existing water and sewer system stay as it currently exists. The Town would continue to do maintenance, repair leaks, address sewage backups and insurance claims. This alternative is not a preferred choice as the Town wants to be more proactive rather than reactive in providing reliable utilities to its residences.
2. **CORE -WATER AND SEWER MAIN REPLACEMENT** – This alternative replaces the old failing water main on Main Street from Park Street to Mormon Street and the inadequate sewer line on Main Street from Speelmon to Chicago Street.
3. **WATER ALTERNATIVE NO 1** – This alternative replaces the existing old water main from Main Street to Mormon Avenue and continues and ties into the two 100,000 gallon water storage reservoirs.
4. **SEWER ALTERNATIVE NO. 2** – This alternative replaces the substandard lift station and control panel and replaces the existing substandard sewer main with a new main from Speelmon Street to Mormon Avenue.

Various combinations of the four alternatives discussed above were evaluated. The Town decided to try to fund alternative 2, 3 and 4 together in one project. Because these are simple replacement projects, there was no need to evaluate other piping options and related costs.

B. ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COSTS

Table 1 provides a summary of the proposed cost for the entire project.

Table 1. Alternative Cost

Alternative	Construction Cost Estimate
Total cost of improvements	\$1,281,769

C. TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS

The estimated total cost of the proposed project is \$1,566,000. The Town has received three grants for the project (CDBG, TSEP, and DNRC), will use some

other town money on hand, and will close a Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan of \$306,000. Water rates will increase approximately \$7.00 per month, due to the project. Sewer rates may increase slightly.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. PLANNING AREA

The Town of Ekalaka is located in Carter County. According to the 2000 census, there were 410 people residing in the town. The per capita median household income in the town is \$19,432 which is 41 percent below the State of Montana median household income at \$33,024.

Construction of the proposed project should take no more than a year after award of a contract. Construction is anticipated to be completed in 2008.

B. FLOW PROJECTIONS

The existing water system has adequate storage for current needs with two 100,000 gallon concrete water storage reservoirs. The town uses approximately 45,000 gallons of water on a typical winter day and approximately 123,000 gallons of water on a peak summer day. The town chlorinates all potable water which enters the distribution system. The town has six public water wells of which three are normally used for municipal purposes.

C. NATURAL FEATURES

Ekalaka is located in southeastern Montana. The area is primarily rolling hills and land use is mainly farm and rangeland. Average annual precipitation is less than 15 inches. Annual total snow fall averages 25 inches. The average high temperature is 57.1 degrees Fahrenheit and the average low is 31.4 degrees.

The planning area consists primarily of urban developments. The proposed project is located all within the existing street right-of-way owned and operated by the town.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reviewed the proposed action and project site location and determined that there are no federally listed threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species present in the area.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PROPOSED PROJECT

A. DIRECT AND INDIRECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Housing and Commercial Development – Developed land use within the town is primarily urban development. The proposed improvements are not expected to have an impact on housing and commercial development.
2. Future Land Use – No adverse impacts to land use are expected from the proposed project.
3. Floodplains and Wetlands – None of the project area lies within the 100-year or 500-year floodplains. No wetlands have been identified on the proposed construction site.
4. Cultural Resources – The construction site is previously-disturbed land. After reviewing the project description, Damon Murdo of the State Historic Preservation Office concluded that there is a low probability cultural properties will be impacted; therefore, a cultural resource inventory is not warranted. However, he recommended that the Historic Preservation Office be contacted in the event cultural resources are identified during construction.
5. Fish and Wildlife – No impacts on biological resources in the area are anticipated by the proposed project.
6. Water Quality – Impacts on water quality are expected to be minor and short-term. The proposed improvements will cross Russell Creek in the area of the intersection of State Highway No. 7 and State Road 323. Russell Creek is usually a dry creek bed with some surface water runoff during storm events. Construction regulations will require every effort is made to keep sediment out of the creek with an erosion site plan. The proposed improvements are not expected to negatively impact surface water resources. Appropriate permits will be obtained.
7. Air Quality - Short-term negative impacts on air quality may occur from heavy equipment, dust and exhaust fumes during project construction. Construction practices and dust abatement measures will be implemented during construction to control dust, thus minimizing this problem.
8. Public Health – The proposed project is not expected to have adverse impacts on public health, and should instead enhance public health by upgrading water mains and replacing the inadequate sewer lift station.
9. Energy - During construction of the proposed project, additional energy will be consumed, causing a direct short-term impact on this resource.
10. Noise - Short-term impacts from increased noise levels may occur during construction of the proposed project improvements. Construction

activities are anticipated to last no more than twelve months and will occur only during daylight hours.

B. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Short-term construction-related impacts, such as noise, dust and traffic disruption, will occur but can be minimized through proper construction management. Energy consumption during construction cannot be avoided.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public hearings were held on the proposed project and funding options on March 1, 2006 and April 5, 2006. General comments were made with no comments against the proposed project.

Also, on January 2, 2008, the town held a public hearing to discuss the replacement of the water main in Russell Creek. A Section 404 permit will be awarded from the Department of Army Corp of Engineers. In addition, the local Natural Resources Conservation Service and Floodplain Administer will be contacted prior to construction.

VII. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The following documents were used in the environmental review of this project and are considered to be part of the project file:

- A. Preliminary Engineering Report, April 2006, prepared by Kadrmas, Lee and Jackson, Dickenson, North Dakota.
- B. Environmental Checklist, April 13, 2006, prepared by Kadrmas, Lee and Jackson, Dickenson, North Dakota.
- C. Town of Ekalaka Water and Wastewater Project, Montana Department of Commerce Environmental Review, January 2008.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

☐ EIS ☐ More Detailed EA ☐ No Further Analysis

EA prepared by:

Name
EA reviewed by:

Date

Name

Date